

LXXV. Extract of a Letter to the Reverend Thomas Birch, D. D. Secretary to the Royal Society, from Mr. Abraham Mason, of Barbadoes, relating to an extraordinary Agitation of the Sea there, 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1761, and an epidemical Disorder in that Island.

S I R, Barbadoes, May 30, 1761.

Read March 11, 1762. I Cannot omit giving you an account of a very extraordinary motion of the sea, (I think it was the last day of March past) not unlike that, remarked here, on the dreadful day of calamity, which happened at Lisbon; with this difference, the last was not so sudden as the former, in the flux and reflux; which sufficiently shews, that the shock must have been greater, that occasioned it, as it is most likely they proceeded from the same cause, (viz.) that of an earthquake, whereby some place, under the surface of the sea, has been sunk.

According to the best observations that could be made, the tide ebbed and flowed, in about eight minutes, between eighteen inches and two feet, and continued so three hours, regularly decreasing till night, when it was no more observable.

It is very remarkable, that, since that time, the island has been in a very deplorable condition, having suffered under the severest colds, that have been ever known. The distress has been so general, that I may venture to assert, (with confidence) that nineteen

teen twentieths of the inhabitants of the island have felt the effects of the contagion; and to some it has been repeated several times. It has puzzled all the adepts in pharmacy, to find out the cause and cure of it. One favourable circumstance has attended it, (viz.) few have died with it. The leeward islands have not escaped it, having raged there more violently, and more fatal. His Majesty's ships have severely felt the effects of it, some of them not being capable of keeping the seas, for want of men fit for service.

This happening at a season of the year remarkably the healthiest, makes it the more surprizing; I had said strange, in compliance with the aptness of the expression, only, I think, all natural causes are equally so, though those are not alike strangers to them, whose business it is to seek the acquaintance. Bleeding has been found of great efficacy, and used, both by way of prevention and cure, with great success.

S I R,

Your most obedient

humble servant,

Abraham Mason.